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From Idol to Icon: The Politics of Mourning

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ABSTRACT *This paper is an overview and condensed synopsis of some selected previous publications that have taken as their focus the problematics of mourning on both the personal (intraspychic and relational) levels as well as on the level of the collective at decisive historical moments. It takes as a framework for this investigation the concepts of idol and of icon as ways to exemplify modes of mourning. Mourning through the idol becomes problematic for the transformations of the inner economy of loss, while mourning through the icon is facilitative of psychic change. In this context, themes that are examined include: the parental loss of a child; the motif of the face; the failure to mourn the events of 9/11; religious fundamentalism; shame and violence; and dreaming as a processing system for unthinkable loss. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: mourning; loss; shame; icon; idol; transformation; the face; dreams; terror; violence

OVERTURE

I should like to offer an introduction and an overview of some themes and engagements that have been important to me over time. What one expresses often shapes how one expresses it. In Freud's papers, for example, his style varied greatly depending on the topic under consideration: sometimes spacious and speculative, other times precise and cautious. The themes that concern me, and that find multiple prismatic reflections on both the level of the clinical and the political, are ones that I am drawn to express in an idiom that is a bit more free associative than linear, more toward the poetic than the positivist exposition. In so doing, one template for me has been the work of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1983, 1987) within philosophy and Wilfred Bion (1965) within post-Kleinian psychoanalysis. In both instances there is an emphasis on multiplicity and indeterminacy, on layered flows and the capacity to dream over causality and fixed determinations. The transformations these viewpoints author align with modes of expression that attempt to convey an atmosphere suggest an emotional ambience, and speak to a multiplicity of perspective, without attaining definitive conclusion or closure. In writing in this way here I offer condensed summaries and suggestive threads from some selected previous publications. The move between each theme is more like the transition between visual scenes than a precise geometry.

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SETTING THE STAGE

The psyche is the domain of the felt and sensed invisible. It is the event that manifests in narratives of desire and through the register of image. The psyche gives privilege to fantasy and dream, to wish and longing. The inner world is recollective and given over to memory yet, paradoxically, it ever holds open pathways to possibility, often under the most extreme conditions of lived limitation. The psyche is also the field of the spectral, the space in which threads of loss haunt the self. While the temporality of the lived flows through the fabric of being, the haunted self abides in co-present frozen moments. The self that is haunted does not demarcate the passing of time as duration.

The present moment, instead, must somehow find wholeness while seizure by specters of the lived gone by threaten as irruptions of anxiety, dreads without objects, trances, presences dense in events whose magnitude cannot be comprehended. Under the force of pain that constricts the heart, the self, in ever subtle and often unregistered ways, becomes wrapped in shrouds of lost possibilities: images that refuse to release one into the present moment.

Inner objects, whose voices torment or accuse or excite, take over moments otherwise implicate with wonder or beauty or grace. Loss, whether of innocence or connection or possibility, seizes with a subtle but insistent claim moments of the self's ongoing being. Yet, often, it is precisely through these pathways of closure which seem to crush that new openings, revealed at first in fleeting images or sensed intimations, often announce themselves.

THE GHOST IN THE MOTHER

I have been interested in this rhythm between loss and opening as it is embodied on the level of intimate relations as well as within historical moments that give decisive shape to identity. Within this frame I have tried to think about what is the fated trajectory of the child whose mother has been marked by the loss of a prior child (Emery, 2002). The work of Abraham and Torok (1986) has been instructive as a starting point for reflection on this. The distinction between two modes of processing impact has been influential on both philosophy, in the elliptical meditations of Jacques Derrida (Hobson, 1998), and on psychoanalysis, in the work of Andre Green (1986) and Julia Kristeva (1992). Central to this literature on mourning is the distinction between introjection and incorporation. The model for these modes of taking in an experience is gustatory: introjection is like a meal that is satisfactorily assimilated and becomes part of the fiber of oneself. Incorporation, on the other hand, is more like a meal that is taken in but cannot be digested. In incorporation, what is taken in remains encased within the subject in suspension, frozen in time, encrypted, treated as a secret and venerated internal idol.

The fate of mourning is different under each of these modes of internalization. In the state of incorporation mourning becomes problematic and, in a sense, unceasing. Here, the unmourned one lives within the shadow of the object (Freud, 1917/1957) as a preserved and idolized personification. The frozen internal object is excluded from the network of identifications and thus from language. The incorporated object does not enrich the ego but is encased in the unconscious aspect of the ego as an entombed idol. The idol, we read in the Hebrew Bible, was shaped as an effigy of a dead child whose loss could not be borne and so was preserved in the form of a material object suggestive of the lost one. Idols displace the space of absence. The lost one who cannot be grieved is enshrined as an idol that inhabits

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the subject as a secret but orienting discourse, as a voice that directs the manifest and shapes functions that otherwise give richness to the lived in a manner that impoverishes their growth and circumscribes the capacity for psychic change. Held as in an internal tomb or an enclave, the incorporated one shapes in the subject a felt but disturbing sense of being haunted by subtle turbulences that thicken the inter-subjective with an unlocatable but almost visceral beckoning. This ghosting of the relational in-between gives rise to a misplaced sense of home. It fills relational rhythms of abiding comfort and simple presence with an irritating and claustrophobic ill-at-ease, a dis-ease of being.

One patient describes his dead brother as like a fascinating but unformulated reflection in a hidden mirror. The lost one who never goes away is, he said, an occult companion. Periods of solitude are for him respites from this haunting that dislocates this young man from finding ease within social relations. In solitude he finds a freedom to be without pressure yet he must, in these restorative and productive moments, also negotiate the potential collapse of the awakened inner world into cryptic communion with the ghost within. Incorporation of the psychic body of the mother's extruded object of impossible mourning exerts force on all relations and on the economies of desire. This other within functions like a strange attractor whose effect is that the haunted subject becomes intermittently held in a reverie of unformulated memory. The ghost within hijacks mood and agency. For one so haunted, affective inscapes of desire can become saturated with predator–prey turbulences. The hungry ghost in search of relational linkages feeds through projective and eviscerating identifications, in the extreme depleting the creative life drive as it enshrouds the other in provocative idols of mourning.

Persons haunted by maternal incorporative mourning often attract as partners those who are correlatively haunted or who at least share a kinship with feeling ghosted through the inscription of a parental secret. In one instance a couple who shared this biographical symmetry built a rhythm to their life around work addiction in oscillation with a mutually constructed muted deadness that occupied their relational space. Their life together remained so encrypted until one began to shift out of equanimity with this pseudo-solace and sought more relational resonance.

Intrapsychic crypts manifest in the inter-subjective field as a certain flattening or de-animation of potential space. The vector of the haunting secret robs the self of creative élan and, at the extreme, collapses potential spaces and generative illusion into a defining negation. Self becomes the negative of its own being as it lives in deferral for the absent image that is privately infused with an aura of the dark numinous. The ghosted personality speaks not as oneself but as an Other. One striking example was Jane, whose narrative was rich with poetic allusion as she wove a spell of words that occluded meaning and history. Jane, I gradually realized, was not a subject. She did not speak, but was the echo chamber of another voice. She was a trace that erased itself in its self-presentation. One day she arrived with a present, given to her on her birthday: a ventriloquist's puppet. She begins, in this moment, to decode the secret, to open the crypt through this emblem of the lost voice that can no longer speak on its own behalf but that equally can never leave her. Self as agent is suspended under the drive toward union with the inner idol.

Another patient conveys with vivid poignancy the scene of the mother lost to loss with a dream, offered at the beginning of his analysis. James is in a temple where he witnesses on a table as on a sacrificial altar or a mortuary slab the body of a woman, stone-sill and rigid

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as his gaze is drawn toward her breast. Through many twists and turns James gradually unfreezes from the dissociations of fascination and rigid longings. The body of the dead mother then became for him less of a still point around which his psychic life turned. He began to find more ease with aliveness, more expansion of interest and investment.

I have come to think of these transformations from incorporation toward introjection in terms of two dimensions: mourning through the idol and mourning through the icon (Emery, 1997, 2005). In mourning through the idol, the Other is shrouded in rigid veneration manifest in dissociative voyeuristic reverie. Passive adhesive contact, addictions, sado-masochistic fantasy enactments, self-loathing, and entrancement often follow. The idol, as Jean-Luc Marion (1991) has suggested, blocks contact with the invisible and thus with psychic depth. With this impediment in contacting the expanded psychic field the capacity for imaginative play is reduced to the repetitions of phantasy. In mourning through the idol, one is locked in a tandem object relationship with the dead. One is frozen, petrified as the Other is in certain moments reduced to a fetish, a perverse prosthetic function. The otherness of the Other is appropriated into a labyrinth of secrets that function to preserve cryptic enclaves (Emery, 2000).

In mourning through the icon, in contrast, there is an opening to the beyond. A luminescence shines forth within and through the work of mourning. Feeling is felt, sensation sensed. Through the field of the psychic icon the visible is no longer a solicitation of objects that reflect cultic inner states but an opening to displays that fill the subject with solicitations of presence that enrich the being of the subject. In the iconic field loss is less demarcated in outlines of lack and void that reflect as in a mirror on the ego of the subject; rather, the silence through which the lost speaks also vibrates with evident registration with the inaudible frequency from which all that is spoken arises, now enriched with numinous depth. Iconic mourning yields intimations of what Bion called "O", the illuminating thing-itself that manifests as a moment of impact, an awakening and a realization, an emotional truth. Mourning that is processed through the mental register which functions in the inner world the way an icon does in art and devotion is in touch with the silent spot in the psyche body-self – the space of introjection – that foreshadows a series of transformations whose outcome is further integration of the walled-off secret and with this inclusion restored vitality. Self that is haunted by mournful idols transfigures through this process of shared recognition into one enriched with resilience. With the opening of the psychic crypt the madness of not being another does not grip as a private obsessional recrimination. Wonder and thanks-giving occupies the space previously given over to dread and persecution.

FACING "O"

I have always looked upon faces with interest and at times amazement, drawn to their mystery and aesthetic of depth, at once hidden and revealed, enigmatic and figurative.

The philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, more than anyone else, has taken the face as the starting point for numerous meditations. For Lévinas (1961/1969), the face before me calls me forth. The face, he notes, solicits in its appeal, beckons in its open vulnerability. The face announces an ethics outside of any reflection. Before the face we are infinitely responsible and in so being must attempt to honor the way the other is beyond all projections – assumptions, representations, theories, phantasies, subtle violent ascriptions. Foreclosure of the face is summarized by Lévinas under the term "totality". Totality for Lévinas resonates with Bion's

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explorations of the forces in the psyche that work against growth and creativity. The face, in contrast, is antidote to totality. What the "face" is for Lévinas the symbol "O" is for Bion.

There are multiple dimensions to trauma. There is, for instance, the trauma of being held in the prison of non-recognition before an evacuated gaze that exiles one into an inter-subjective space of frozenness and stasis, paralysis and no-thingness. Another less appreciated dimension of trauma – one that at first may seem to be an odd use of the term – is the trauma of ecstasy, a word that literally means to stand outside of oneself. This "trauma" is given in the awakened face to face when the gaze is opened to sustained exchange in which the in-between invites a more contemplative consideration of the other in the intertwining of their revelation and mystery. The first trauma is the trauma of totality while the second instance is the trauma of infinity, the dimension in which "O" manifests.

The face is a presence that announces the mystery of the other. Before the face seen with contemplative attention one registers a double shock: the shock of awakening and of incomprehension. If I meet the other with hospitality and without pre-conception I cannot really fathom the reverberations of impact to which I have opened. Totality reduces the Other to the Same on both personal and collective political levels. With radical opening totality is undermined. Facing the Other is a counter-normative act. It is subversive of hierarchy and deconstructs control. It confronts the schizoid element in the politics of everyday indifference.

Lévinas' meditations on the infinitude of the face present us with two conditions which, when taken together, point toward an impossible obligation. On the one hand the ethical demand of the face to face, free from the constraint of totalitarian mind sets, states that my responsibility to the other is infinite. At the same time, their otherness also always escapes me; it is more than I can ever master. In contrast to the tension held within the interplay between this call and this limit is a kind of legitimized violence in the routine flattening of the other. Being disposed to the sovereign enigma of the other is in this everyday mode foreclosed. Perspective is lost, nuance and depth diminished as the other is transcribed into an uncanny subject, a familiar stranger, a spectral presence, an intrusive indifferent alien. Culmination of this pathway if it builds momentum evolves into the other becoming an "enemy": demonized, reviled, and perceived as a tormenting and intolerable threat. Enemies are endemic in the domain of the political yet equally ubiquitous within the intimacy of the relational where the other is reduced through idolization into the enemy with whom I live and whose very breath I grow to despise.

Within the psychotherapeutic field this progressive disfigurement of the face is also frequently activated as either an entrenched and valued mode of resistance or a form of hallucinosis in which deluded ideation is treated as superior to living contact. In this context, the task is to work through hysterical intrusions that shape self in malicious identification with the enemy within, who is then further managed through projective evacuation of aspects of mind (thinking, perceiving, feeling) attached to good-enough bad objects within the social field. The ethical obligation of infinite responsibility toward the multiple figurations within the inner world of the other asks of the therapist that they bear witness to the unthinkable good and the intolerable bad in the other as well as to what is spectral, to what in so many ways escapes us, yet always longs deeply to be known, often through the mirror of disturbance and on a level that is incommensurate with the limits of the capacity for comprehension. In contemplative consideration of the other, one is uniquely given a responsibility that presents one with an often elusive but real grief that is inscribed in the

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conditions and demands of this singular form of encounter. The other wants to be deeply known yet often fears precisely what is desired as one simultaneously must bear the gap between being and expression, intention and capacity for understanding.

The task of the therapist entails in a unique way encounter with what Lévinas designates by the term "face" and that Bion names "O". From both starting points, the therapist must approach their client in the way a mystic might gaze upon an icon: as a visible that is a figuration of the ineffable. The therapeutic process seen from this viewpoint is one of transmuting mental idols of memory and affect into psychic icons – pathways that carry one into enlightened openings of new possibilities. This paradoxical demand depends on abiding with what Bion designates by the symbol "O". The various translations of "O" include: emotional truth, invariants in personality, the unknowable, rays of divinity. "O" is a mode of awakened self-inhabitation, outside of memory and desire, in which the exteriority of the other and of the unconscious as the other-within is received with illumination. To invite the arrival of the other-within requires, as I have suggested, that one approach psychic life the way one might look upon an icon: registering the given, while taking its image as a portal into a mystery we cannot ever really circumscribe. This "O" state, which includes provisional understandings of emotional truth, forms against the background "O" condition that is "the-thing-itself". The task of this attainment means, in Bion's language, to become "O", which also means, in Lévinas' enigmatic understanding, to make contact with "otherwise than being", in which ethics precedes ontology. When Bion (1965) stated that one must "be 'become' by 'O'" (p. 55), he is saying in equally difficult language what Lévinas refers to as the "unassumable", which I would translate as the uncanny appeal of the other-within.

The face of the Other reveals what I cannot control and what is outside my mental construal. The face, said Lévinas, announces the presence of exteriority. To live in a world surrounded by a vast display of difference is, for some, to be tormented by their own insufficiency. Otherness, in and of itself, becomes a violation, the impact of which is managed by, among other strategies, aggravated appetite. "I dreamt," she said, "that I ate your face." Incorporative union through sacrificial erasure gives to life confused triumph over a core emptiness that, in turn, is linked to an intolerance of otherness. This dreamer then muses on babies, imagines a baby who, when feeding, cannot see or be seen. To see the face of the Other, to face the Other is to face "O," which, in this rendering, is the face of the mother. The face of the mother is another epiphany of "O". To face the disappearing face that my patient, in ruthless hunger, instigated meant, ultimately for her, to work with transformations of the face from one that merges absence with incorporation toward tolerance for an otherness which is not an abandonment or insult, but reveals as display. This meant growth in the capacity to see the "face" of the therapist beyond the screens of activated "memory" and "desire". What is a commemoration of absence and loss also held within it an introjective opening to a mode of presence that was beyond the defensive containment of phantasy and traumatic memory. Therapy with her had as its focus the transmutation of a persecuting yet desired visage – an idol – into one of benevolent exteriority, that is, an icon.

THE SHADOW OF NO TOWERS

It is my view that the theme of the spectral finds strong portrayal in the un-thought enactments of the political. I believe that politics is a field especially open to the actions of the non-repressed unconscious which manifest in the collective through events expressing the force of the negative: disaster, disorder, and catastrophe, among others. It is on this level

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of the un-thought that psychic ghosts inflame and inspire collective shame–retribution cycles. One such event that was saturated with this precise configuration is 9/11 (Emery, 2006). This was a collective trauma which, for some, had particular resonance with their inner world.

One person, whose traumatic and deprived history was exquisitely aligned with this trajectory within the field of the political, said of herself, after reading an interview with Art Spiegelman, the cartoonist who wrote *The Shadow of No Towers* (Spiegelman, 2004), "I am a ghostly homunculus." In this profile of self that found dark harmony and an overly good fit between personal and collective trauma, the shock of terror fueled feelings of breakdown, a sense of falling forever.

In what might now be called "the Age of Terror" we are required to be at home with the uncanny, with that which is paradoxically oddly familiar and at the same time radically strange. Strategies of terror continually mutate in response to conditions into ever-evolving guises and spectral forms. The terrorist is largely faceless, an enemy without a homeland. International terror networks include amalgams of gangster capitalism, drug cabals, and ideological cells committed to symbolic immortality. The Age of Terror is one of predation without boundaries in which the self feels increasingly permeable to random global threat from de-faced enemies. Freud spoke of trauma in terms that I still find poignant and relevant. Trauma, he said, is "an effraction of the stimulus barrier" (Freud, 1966, p. 112). 9/11 was a national, if not global effraction of the stimulus barrier. The collective could not contain the ensuing grief as the leadership also failed in provision of guiding capacity. The national psyche could not introject this impact and, under self-serving leadership, inspired through tough guy heroics the resulting incorporations encrypted grief in the evolving "War on Terror".

Spectral terror sponsors a grief that is symmetrical with this form of threat. In the War on Terror grief itself becomes spectral and mutates into viral variants of numbness and blood revenge. Policies that issued from un-mentalized psychic pain replicate through actions that are the negation of civic life. Leadership infected with the specter of terror collapsed into a lethal combination of brittleness, smugness, cynicism, and mythologies of redemption through triumph. Cliché and flat truisms worked in tandem with numbing certitude. Loss became encrypted. We could not decipher its code or read its signs. Complexity was collapsed into regressive simplifying perceptions and righteous outrage. Encryption of loss disavowed was further displaced through the hypnotics of entertainment. What should America now do, the President asked? Go shopping.

In the world of the enemy who has a face loss has its own analogical presentation. It finds commemorative signification, its monuments functioning more like icons linking past and future through visible emblematics of the invisible. In contrast, the War Against Terror is a war against ghosts. Those lost in the war that has no end have themselves become largely faceless. As the President (George W. Bush) said at the time: "Nobody likes to see a dead body." In the War on Terror each citizen becomes a possible suspect and thus rendered equivalent in operative public policy to another potential faceless enemy: a ghostly homunculus. Under such conditions, mourning the losses that terror sponsors can only happen in the shadows and then in constricted form. One unconscious motif in the resulting policies was that mourning was only acceptable if it was circumscribed within the claustral space of idolization.

In contrast to mournful idols that reflect the symmetric logic of sprectral enemies in the Age of Terror, iconic mental function is possible when sufficient psychic space holds mournful being and collective grief in shared attentive consideration. Ritual and commemoration

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configure symbols of meaning that bind painful emotional truths. Public spaces then become events of memory and declaration. In iconic mourning, links to the community of the absent are held within the evocations of memory. The dead are given collective witness and so become woven into the narrative life of the community. The War on Terror, however, formulates a psychic field in which idolization of the unseen enemy prevails and where communitarian response to loss is held within a national psychic crypt shaped by ghostly filiations between ill-defined policy and a faceless enemy.

The terrorist is eminently spectral: elusive, denizen of caves, hidden in plain sight, spread over the media yet without biography, dark angels of networks, global diplomats for states without representation or in exile, spokespersons for the fundamentalist state of mind. The terrorist, his national counterparts, and his Age are expressions of the feral adolescent who enacts threat and instigates chaos in order to annihilate coherent being. Spectral presences take shape as a "no-thing", the shadow of no towers. The ghosts of terror have as their psychic corollary a dense object mind (Emery, 1992).

The dense object shapes perceptions of the other into a poisonous contaminant, a proliferating metonymic vision of adversity. Dense objects are the fateful consequence of mournful identifications that become intolerable and substitute spite for hospitality and random destruction for interdependent co-arising. Haunting perpetuates haunting through dense object states of self. The "hauntology" of impossible mourning defaces the symbolic and, under the force of this dynamic democratic process, is itself threatened by progressive ghosting, becoming a shadow form of its own possibility. Democratic visions deform in the shadow of the ghost-to-come and spread with malicious aspiration through the erasure of history and the legitimized appropriation of human rights. The psychic ghost seeks sacrificial transcendence through the infliction of damage. In this dense object field truth becomes another spectacle of similitude, a version of spurious empiricism that turns inference into confabulated certitude. Inquiry and exploration as a process of disclosure are demeaned. Contempt for truth prevails. The logic of the psychopath becomes sovereign.

The Age of Terror is one of the dark faces of the global. It is part of the international marketplace in which everything is for sale. An expansionist force of domination proliferates by valorizing the market over human dignity. As markets became global terrorism grew. Transparency and accessibility also fueled its counterpart: the spread, over time, of a of policy of psychopathic expediency that included training those who, at one point, were viewed as useful to the security interests of the US, only subsequently to become terrorist celebrities whose object of vilification is the West. The resulting attack on the United States punctured the global power that represents to the world the unity of the greatest force with the discourse of the law (Derrida, 2003). The attack of 9/11 represented the return of the ghost-within that exports violence in the name of security under ever shifting alliances. Values of dissimulation and encryption, erasure, and feral violence have become prevailing exports in this war without end, mounted against an enemy who constantly mutates into one without a face.

Derrida postulated as an antidote to the strong force inscribed in the war against the ghost the "vulnerable force" (see De Cauter, 2004). The vulnerable force is, he said, in the context of the Brussels Tribunal (on Iraq) (http://www.brussellstribunal.org/?menu=HOME&submenu=1), one that is outside of salvation and teleology. Yet it is one that gives outline to another form of gathering – a gathering that welcomes the gratuitous and is hospitable to the face where, beyond the idol and outside of the crypt, the light of the other shines forth.

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AN ETHICS OF ENGAGEMENT

This theme of the weak force as one vision of an ethics of engagement was taken up at the United Nations as part of a panel in honor of Sergio Vieira de Mello, special envoy to Iraq who was killed there in August 2003.

Violence of sufficient density transforms a group into a gang, a spouse into a threat, sponsors networks of terror. Violence dismantles the good as it sacrifices an ethics of care in the name of "might is right" personal myths and cultic ideologies. It exploits epistemologies of salvation. It splits the world into the saved and the corrupt. Shame is the strange attractor that feeds violence as it is both the outcome and instigator of damaged bonds. Shame seeds violence as it reflects a loss of face. Witness, in contrast, begins to heal the wounded omnipotence of shame. Speaking on November 11, 2002 at the British Museum, London, deMello noted that the concept of "civilization" is limited when it fails to ground achievement in fundamental human rights and when it demonstrates through time habitual apathy for those subject to violence, inequality, and injustice.

True achievement happens only when "civilization" is also inclusive of "cities of refuge" – places receptive to the dispossessed that offer the shamed space for restored dignity. When I think of cities of refuge I also think of a member of the Dinka tribe in Sudan to whom I once spoke. I think of his witness to many shootings and torture and to those many others who died from disease. I think of his wandering hundreds of miles at age nine and his nine years in a Kenyan refugee camp. I also think of what allowed him not to shatter under such force of massive loss and displacement. I think, too, of the thread of witnesses he spoke about, that he carried within him through it all. The spirit of internalized others personifies the energies of guardians and soothers, of protectors and wisdom-bearers that sustain in cataclysms of rupture and discontinuity, Through benevolent inner presences, a superordinate recognition of self offers the displaced person generative links to a wider fabric of inter-connectedness inside of which there is a kind of containment that goes beyond circumstance, even at times unthinkable ones. The potential for shatter and shame does not then taint core dignity. The essence of person is preserved in the surround of damage and breakdown when a web of witnesses shapes stimulus barriers against otherwise near unbearable dreads. Sergio Vieira deMello's life also was testimony to this attainment in the midst of catastrophe (Emery, 2004).

TRANSFIGURING RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Given the proliferation and spread of fundamentalist strains of thought and their profound effect on relationships and groups, I have been interested in the psychic space of fundamentalism and potential points of access into its softening.

"I want", one patient said, "to cut off my hand." He envisions clashes of civilizations that drive him through the inner counsel of a malevolent "guardian angel" toward purity and perfection. One consequence of this purity drive is the compulsion to eliminate the offending organ: the violating hand. Violence begins with a hole in the heart that is less a portal than it is a conduit into worlds of damage and paralytic absence. What he could not do was to mourn his damaged self, the taint in being that colored every self–other perception. No benign boundary and no comforting inner witness protected him from the abyss of non-being. He lived through a comatose and furious baby self never held with consistency. "I am", he says, "consumed by evil. I am two beings yet all I want is the love of God."

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The inability to mourn finds expression in the spread of mimetic contagion (Emery, 2005). Incorporative mourning seeks relief from the corpse within through inflammatory ideologies. Dense object self states turn the other in me into an abject exile, a contaminant to be eliminated. Self in the shadow of dense object orchestration condenses into a contracted point saturated with shame and reactivity. Dense object mental states assert hegemony over the fragility of intimacy as transcendent attachment is collapsed into possession by destitute degradations. In this formation the spiritual, as one form of the weak force, is denuded of humility and invested with apocalyptic arousals. Scapegoat hungers magnify. The strong force that recruits good enough enemies from the theatres of global politics trumps the weak force of hospitality and acceptance toward the susceptible self. Hunger for the ineffable derails into a fundamentalism that replaces spirit with intolerance and conspiracy-rich certitudes. For my client this meant that the "Christ-Father" who haunted him with scrutiny and demand was more specter than spirit and became within the fundamentalist economy image of an agency that seeks restoration of the damaged self through persecuting violent displacements.

Catastrophe that cannot be borne is managed by returning the body to the crypt. In one version of the Christian imaginary it has been said that "violence and unending pain are the lot of those whose aim is to ascend to Heaven in the body" (Climacus, 1982, p. 87). The psychic body preserved as a kind of violated totalization seeks reflection in violent doubles. Encasement in the tomb fuels mimetic crises. The gaze of the Other deeply received, in contrast, opens the heart through lament and welcoming to a softening presence in which others, now no longer enemies, are granted dignity and toward whom one extends care.

Presence builds credibility through capacity to process evacuations of damage. The armor of schizoid autonomy gives over, ever so gradually, to moments of reliance and trust. Blessing begins through paroxysms of tears. Persecutory fears function less as a containing tomb. For my patient this pathway was facilitated not only in the transference but also through prayer to the divine "Mother", for him a benign and holding presence undamaged by lived history. Prayer released from politicized obsession facilitated generative mourning and became a grounding supplement, a container inside of which he further transfigures, time after time, from persecutory demand through a self giving in which he feels given to. Devotion is a form of dreaming. The gaze of the conjured archetype of generative maternity became a consoling fiat that transmitted reflections of sustaining and embracing acceptance. Violent mourning eases through the kenosis of tears as self simultaneously desires to care for others. Mourning through the inner icon transfigures the sacrificial rivalry that otherwise fuels the fundamentalist state of mind (Emery, 2009).

IN THE LIGHT OF MOURNING

I have become increasingly focused on contemplative practices as facilitating environments and pathways for one's transformation into the expanse of being. While such modes of self–other engagement may have significant split-off protective and defensive profiles, I have been primarily interested in their generative offering of integral care for the self.

Contemplative practices are a dialogue with presence (Emery, 2008). Such practices also can be breakthroughs of the unexpected, linking oneself with energies that modulate self-regulation and point toward numinous realizations. Through contemplation the capacity for presence grows that shapes openings to the subtle light that sources being. Presence transmutes affective dis-regulation and mental saturations. Contemplation that is sustained

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can function like an icon of mourning: density disperses, reactivity diminishes, and sensitivity can be swaddled in evocative blankets of care. Mental state idols, in contrast, can freeze the imagination in obsessive recrimination and an underlying aggressive melancholia. Mourning through the idol diminishes contact with the elusive ineffability of both desirous being and being beyond desire. Traumatic idols charge emotional atmospheres with paranoia and catastrophe. The space that contemplative practice opens us to in their non-defensive usage invites presences that beckon as signifiers of love. Through contemplation vast and hard-to-define worlds are birthed into awareness with immediacy and intimacy.

Such practices also ripen the dream space to receive healing intimations from the depth of being through which self expands into further and new dimensions of possibility. Dreams, in which primary processing is generative, function as intrapsychic icons for the sublation of loss through higher-dimensional awareness planes. Henry feels a pull to places where spirit manifests and originates. He seeks indestructible starting points where damage can be worked with in a way that therapy has previously not offered. Therapy that is void of space for the vastness of the spirit is for him a limiting processing system, fruitful yet constrained, leaving out whole worlds.

He dreams of a field of flowers formed of membranes, gossamer thin, delicate yet resilient, made of substance that seems not of this world. They display a golden radiance. Present with this image are topological folds of feeling, fourth-dimensional sensation shapes, and complex geometries of intellect. The dream-body self is alive with vitality without limit, sensate and pulsing with incarnate numinous energy. Henry is fed by this dream. Parts of him are brought together at a deep core, woven through symbolic realization into a wholeness otherwise only intimidated.

In another dream Henry is walking on terrain of volcanic ash with a spiritual guide who offers wisdom transmission. They come to a site of three crucifixions, three "Christs", two of whom are melancholic idols of mourning, and one whose corpus is liquid gold radiating luminosity, a pure icon of effulgent presence. Bodies merge and meld yet also preserve distinction. The nigredo and the solar self blend into a transfigured dynamic amalgam as the dream body infuses with a foundational energy form that holds together and yet raises to a higher-order synthesis loss and glory, damage and wholeness. Death and life become more than antithetical poles in opposition through trinitarian linkage with complex energy exchanges from within the depth of Henry's being. Idols of mourning become icons of transfiguration.

Dream work is also a vessel for processing epiphanies of introjective awakening. Dream work functions as an icon of spirit, at once representing and transmuting traumas of history that are both personal and collective, figurative and mythic. If conduits of spirit are not saturated with damage they may work at the highest levels, in collaboration with dreaming, to sublate trauma and in so doing birth into presence integrating intrapsychic icons of releasement. In this process condensations of mournful idolatries diminish whose otherwise dense and unprocessed destitution leaves trace upon trace of destructive projective splitting on every level of living, from the most personal to the global. Such transformation is, in my view, one of the fruits of the politics of mourning.

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